

Dinner Meeting

Monday, March 28, 2011

6:30 pm — Dinner; program following at 7:15 pm

Fellowship Hall
Trinity Presbyterian Church
3115 Providence Road



Upcoming Dinner Program

Nora Brooks presents "Julia Grant — Wife of Ulysses S. Grant"



On March 28, 2011, we will be treated to a third performance by Nora Brooks, an 11th grade American History teacher at Sun Valley High School in Union Co. She has received many awards for her historic portrayal

of various famous women who lived in 19th century. At our next meeting, Nora will portray Julia Grant, wife of Ulysses. Julia Boggs Dent Grant (1826 – 1902) was the wife of Ulysses S. Grant,

the 18th President of the US, and the mother of four children. She became acquainted with her future husband through his friendship with her brother, as they were both West Point graduates. She married Grant at age 22 in 1848, at her parent's home in Missouri.

This characterization is particularly important, as we approach the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War in April.

As a companion piece to this program, there will be a silent auction of Civil War books to benefit the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. The books will be

available for preview and to place bids on beginning at 6:00. However, the final bids will be taken 10 minutes after the speaker finishes. Cash or check will be accepted from the highest bidder on each book.

Those not having dinner are welcome to enjoy the program at no charge. To make a reservation for dinner, use the order form (page 3) or contact Jane Johnson at 704.544.0695 or JJCNC@aol.com.

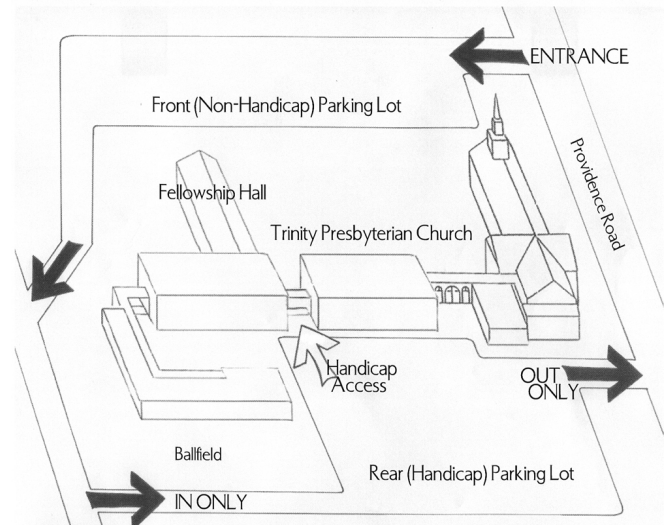
Upcoming MHA Meeting Date
Mark your calendars!
May 23, 2011

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**The MHA meets in Trinity Presbyterian Church's Fellowship Hall.
3115 Providence Road**



Remarks from the President

It will be so good to have MHA back together for the first dinner meeting of the year at Trinity on March 28th! I'm looking forward to a busy and productive year for our association.

Please keep Kathy Herran, a member of our Board and one of our most active and dear members, in your prayers. Kathy was admitted to CMC on December 7th with an infection in the abdominal area. She spent two and a half months in intensive care, had major surgery, and has slowly made progress to the point that she is now located in the CMC rehab facility and is expected to be discharged March 8th. She has started walking again with a walker and is enjoying the therapy. She requires extensive physical and occupational therapy. Kathy is feeling well and excited about getting involved in life again. When she gets home in March, she will still have home healthcare, probably for the next few months as she continues to recover. The Herran family thanks us for the prayers and support. We are truly grateful that Kathy will hopefully be back with us soon.

Jane Estep and I, for the MHA Decorative Arts Survey, have been seeking information about two chairs given by John McKnitt Alexander to his daughter, Peggy, when she married Francis Alexander Ramsey. Mary Boyer tells us that Francis Alexander Ramsey came from Pennsylvania to Greene County, TN in 1783. Perhaps he got the Alexander name from an ancestor in Pennsylvania. Google his name and you can access lots of information. He was very prominent in early Tennessee history. Jane has been corresponding with the Ramsey House Plantation historic house museum in Knoxville, TN, built by Peggy's husband and where the chairs are located.

Peggy and Francis' son, James Gettys McGready Ramsey, was an American historian, physician, and businessman. Ramsey amassed a vast collection of documents and a 4,000 volume library relating to the early history of Tennessee and is best known as the author of the 700-page *The Annals of Tennessee* in 1853, consulting with his friend, historian Lyman Draper. Ramsey built a large plantation at the confluence of the French Broad and Holston rivers and named it "Mecklenburg" after his mother's native Meck-

lenburg County. His life is fascinating and after the Civil War, he and his family ended up in Charlotte, North Carolina in a house they called "Exile's Retreat."

My husband, Terry (who went to UT in Knoxville and is from TN) and I visited the Ramsey House over the Christmas holidays. I met with Sandra Gammon, the outgoing director, and Kayla Webb who gave us a tour of the property and allowed me to "go behind the ropes" – literally – and photograph and examine the chairs and a family record sampler. Along with a second sampler and a Bible, these are the only items thought to be original to the house. The house is fully furnished according to the inventory of Francis Ramsey. I was struck when we drove up because this house is native pink marble – and blue limestone and looks much like Hezekiah's house. You can visit their website, www.ramseyhouse.org, to see pictures. MHA has made a small contribution to Ramsey House in appreciation for their cooperation and information. (See pictures on page 6).

-Linda Dalton, President
704.661.8470
leaseace@aol.com

Robert Davidson of Holly Bend

The Original Catawba Riverkeeper

Through most of his life Robert (Robin) Davidson was one of the commissioners for the Catawba River. All men in the county were required to participate in maintenance of the roads, but those who lived along the Catawba were required to keep the river clear of obstructions so that fish could freely swim upstream. There were several fisheries on the river (one was part-owned by James Latta of Latta Plantation) and it is probable that they caught large quantities of Shad during the spring run. They might have used nets, but more likely used fish traps woven of river reed. These fish were probably sold fresh in Charlotte, perhaps in the open market space below the court house. They were most certainly salted down and sold by the barrel. Of course Shad Roe is a great delicacy, so it may have been sold separately. Apparently the river fishing industry was wide-spread in North Carolina for in 1787 the NC Assembly passed a law allowing County Courts to "Appoint Commissioners to Keep Open Rivers and Creeks...for the Passage of fish Up the Same,"

In 1797 Robin Davidson was 28 and living with his parents, Major John and Violet Davidson at Rural Hill. It would be three years

before he built Holly Bend and married Peggy Osborne. In July of that year, the county court appointed him an "Overseer and Commissioner" for that part of the Catawba River from Dutchman's Creek to Tools Ford. Along with two other commissioners for this section he organized the men living near the river in "removing Obstruction in the navigation" of the river. He was appointed again in 1799, 1803, 1812 and 1816. Robin served in this function continuously from at least 1797 until 1816 and perhaps until he died in 1853.

A curious sidelight to Robin Davidson's connection to the Catawba River is the disappearance of Tools Ford and the roads leading to it. Tools Ford may not have been as important to history as Beattie's, Cowan's, Tuckaseegee, or Nation's Fords, but it was certainly well known and used as a dividing point on the Catawba River. Few of these fords appear on 18th century maps. The first appearance of Tools Ford was on the Strother Map of 1808. That map also showed a road starting at the Statesville Road, just north of John McKnitt Alexander's Alexandriana, and running due west to Tools Ford. The road extended across the Catawba to Lincoln County where it ended at a road connecting Beattie's and Tuckaseegee Fords.

Tools Ford and its road continue to be shown on maps up to 1882. Then it disappears. On



a county map of 1911 neither the ford nor the road leading to it are shown. This is curious. A ford may be used less and less as bridges are built, but it is still always there. And a well-used road usually continues in existence to some extent since it provides access to properties along it.

Also curious is the name change of what we call today McDowell's Creek. This was originally, at least by 1808, known as Davidson's Creek. In 1882 it was shown as Davidson's Mill Creek. However, by 1911 Davidson's Creek was gone forever and the stream was called McDowell's Creek. That same map shows a Davidson's Creek joining the Catawba near the village of Davidson, so that may explain the name change. -Jim Williams

From the Docent Committee Docent Training for Hugh Torance House and Store

A training session for new docents will be on Saturday, March 19th at 1 pm at the Hugh Torance House and Store. In 1779, Hugh Torance, farmer and merchant, bought land in Mecklenburg County. Hugh served in the Revolutionary War, married a widow with eight

children, farmed, and worked as an itinerant merchant. When his only son James reached adulthood Hugh added to his log house and opened the store, which stayed in business until 1825. It supported him, his wives, and children in grand style. In 1831 he built an impressive plantation home, Cedar Grove (privately owned) adjacent to the site.

The Torance family members were good stewards of history, preserving numerous

records concerning every aspect of their lives. It is from these records that we are able to interpret the site with great detail and accuracy. The site is currently open one Sunday a month during the Summer. The site has no staff and depends entirely on volunteers. The House and Store is on Gilead Road near Huntersville, 2 miles west of I 77 exit 23. If you would like to attend the training session, contact Ann Williams at 704.365.2402 or ann.williams@mindapring.com.

An Interesting Inquiry

From Wichita

Last November the MHA received an email, through the web site, asking about the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence of May 20, 1775. We get a lot of these inquiries, but this one was unusual. It was from the students of Wilbur Middle School in Wichita, Kansas. They are competing in the National History Day Competition and had chosen the Meck Dec as their topic to research and report

on. The theme of the NHD this year is "Debate & Diplomacy; Successes, Failures, and Consequences" so they thought that the Meck Dec would be a most appropriate topic. During the fall they researched the topic, wrote papers, and prepared their presentation. The Competition itself begins this spring with local, state and national judging and culminates in June at the University of Maryland. The idea is to teach elementary and secondary school students to perform historical research and to appreciate the history of their country. Over half a million

students participate in this competition each year.

As we always do, no matter the inquiry, your board, along with local historians and librarians, jumped at the chance to assist these students. We provided web sites, publications and papers for them to study to understand the Mecklenburg Declaration and why it is important to the history of the United States. We even provided some "props" for their presentation – a quill pen, ink pot and ink. And we promised to put a copy of their presentation in the MHA Archives, located in the J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections at UNCC.

The local competition in Wichita is being held February 25th and we will let you know whether they place high enough to advance to the State competition. -Jim Williams

Membership Renewals

Membership renewal letters for the 2011 calendar year have been mailed. You can save your organization the costs of printing and mailing by re-newing now. Please fill in the form, make your check payable to the Mecklenburg Historical Association, and mail it to P. O. Box 35032, Charlotte, NC 28235. If your employer has a "matching grant" program, or you are retired from such an organization, please include the matching grant form with your check.

Membership form:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State and Zip _____

E-Mail Address _____

category	single	couple
senior citizen (over 60)	\$15.00	\$25.00
general	30.00	50.00
patron	60.00	100.00
life (single payment)	300.00	500.00
student	free	n/a

March 28, 2011 Dinner Meeting Reservation Form

Mail to: Mecklenburg Historical Association
c/o Jane Johnson, 210 Pineville Forest Drive, Pineville, NC 28134
or email: JJCNC@aol.com

Please make checks payable to Mecklenburg Historical Association.
Questions? Please email Jane Johnson (JJCNC@aol.com) or call her at 704.544.0695.
Please mail your check one week before the dinner so we know how many meals we need.

Enclosed: \$ _____ (total) for _____ seats (\$12 for Seniors)
\$ _____ (total) for _____ seats (\$14 for all others)



"Preserving Mecklenburg's Heritage"

Post Office Box 35032
Charlotte, North Carolina 28235
Phone: 704-333-6422

VISIT US ONLINE
WWW.MECKDEC.ORG

Upcoming Events

The History Calendar

Admission charged at all events unless otherwise noted.

Check the Charlotte Regional History Consortium website for other events.

<http://www.charlotteregionalhistory.org>

CPCC and the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

Southern Secession, Tuesday April 12.
Pease Auditorium at CPCC Central Campus
Dr. John Smith of UNC Charlotte will present two lectures.

9:30 – 10:45 am: "Why Southerners Seceded from the Union in 1860-1861

6:30 – 7:15 pm: Reception followed by

7:30 – 8:30 pm: "Secession in 1860-1861: Why it Matters Today"

Historic Rosedale

3427 N. Tryon Street, Charlotte, NC,
704.335.0325, <http://www.historicrosedale.org>

Gleaned From Their Own Words.

Saturday, March 26 at 11 am

Ann Williams will present a program on learning and interpreting history from journals, letters, and other documents left by our ancestors. She will talk about Rosedale's Dr. David Caldwell whose business ledgers tell us much about the site's history, and his sister-in-law Sarah Davidson whose journal illuminates the village of Charlotte in 1837. Her presentation will feature the Torrance family of Hopewell who left extensive family records. These were the basis for her book, *Your Affectionate Daughter, Isabella*. She will read selections from the book illustrating her research. She will have copies of her books available for sale.

Easter Egg Hunt, Saturday, April 9 at 11 am
Children of all ages will have lots of springtime fun as they search the garden and boxwood maze for the elusive Rosedale Easter Eggs and maybe even the Easter Bunny.

Latta Plantation

5225 Sample Road, Huntersville, NC,
704.875.2312, <http://www.lattaplantation.org>

Art of the Blacksmith.

Saturday, March 5 from 10 am to 5 pm, &
Sunday March 6 from 1 to 4 pm.

19th Century blacksmiths will be on the grounds demonstrating their craft.

Backcountry Circuit Court.

Saturday, March 19th from 10 am to 4 pm
Relive our legal past! Throughout the day

visitors can serve on the jury in the reenactment of three historic Mecklenburg County cases, and can observe an historic duel. Children can participate in a Kid's Court headed by the debate team from West Mecklenburg High School. Plantation tours and food vendors will also be available.

President James K. Polk State Historic Site

12031 Lancaster Hwy., Pineville, NC,
704.889.7145, www.polk.nchistoricsites.org

Henry Clay and James K. Polk: Political Rival,

Saturday, March 12 at 10 am, free
In the summer of 2010 the President James K. Polk State Historic Site saw the installation of a major exhibition featuring the relationship between Henry Clay and President James K. Polk. This lecture, presented by Dr. Dan Dupre, Associate Professor of History at UNCC, will expand on these men's lives and their relationship with one another.

Rural Hill

4431 Neck Road, Huntersville, NC,
704.875.3113, <http://www.ruralhill.net>

Loch Norman Highland Games.

Friday evening and all day Saturday and Sunday, April 16 and 17.

Check <http://www.ruralhill.net> for schedule.

This annual event includes traditional Scottish competitions such as tossing the stone, heaving the sheaf and the Caber Toss (throwing a telephone pole for accuracy), plus children's games, meeting of the clans, piping and drumming, highland dancing, and so much more.

Schiele Museum

1500 E. Garrison Blvd., Gastonia, N.C.
704.866.6900, <https://www.schielemuseum.org>

From Sheep to Shortgown,

Sunday March 27 from 1 to 5 pm
Each spring the sheep are sheared (given a haircut) at the Backcountry Farm; this keeps the sheep cool in the summer and the wool is made into cloth to keep the Pioneer family warm in the winter. Join us for this annual event as historical interpreters in 18th-century dress card and spin the freshly shorn wool into thread. Try your hand at shearing or the simple craft of weaving on a tapeloom. Discover the difference between a shortgown and a waist coat as youngsters "dress the part" of a backcountry child.

Easter in the Carolina Backcountry,

Sunday, April 17 from 1 to 5 pm.
Celebrate Easter in the tradition of backcountry settlers! Try your hand at "egg picking!" with naturally dyed eggs or decorate your own egg with 18th century designs scratched with a pin.

Search for the hidden nest of the "Ostr Hase" (Easter Hare) to learn if the children have been good or bad this year. Discover the significance of making waffles in the spring, and find out why the first spring greens were considered "tonics."

Historic Brattonsville

1444 Brattonsville Rd., McConnells, SC,
803.684.2327,
<http://www.chmuseums.org/ourmuseums/myco/index.htm>

On the Lawn at Hightower Hall – Fundraiser,

Saturday, April 2 from 11:30 am to 1 pm
Enjoy an afternoon of food, drinks and music, plus a 9-hole disc golf course set up on the lawn at this family-friendly event. Advance tickets before March 20th: \$25 for CHM members; \$30 for non-members; \$5 for children ages 5-12. Tickets after March 20th - \$35 for adults; \$5 for children ages 5-12

Through the Looking Glass: The Brattons in Black and White, every Sunday in March at 1:30 and 2:4 pm.

Step through the looking glass during this 45-minute tour and discover what the Brattons valued: freedom, work and home. Ponder what the world was like on the other side of a mirror's reflection as you learn how the Bratton slaves defined the same values.

Living History Saturday: Funeral Customs, March 12 from 10 am to 4 pm.

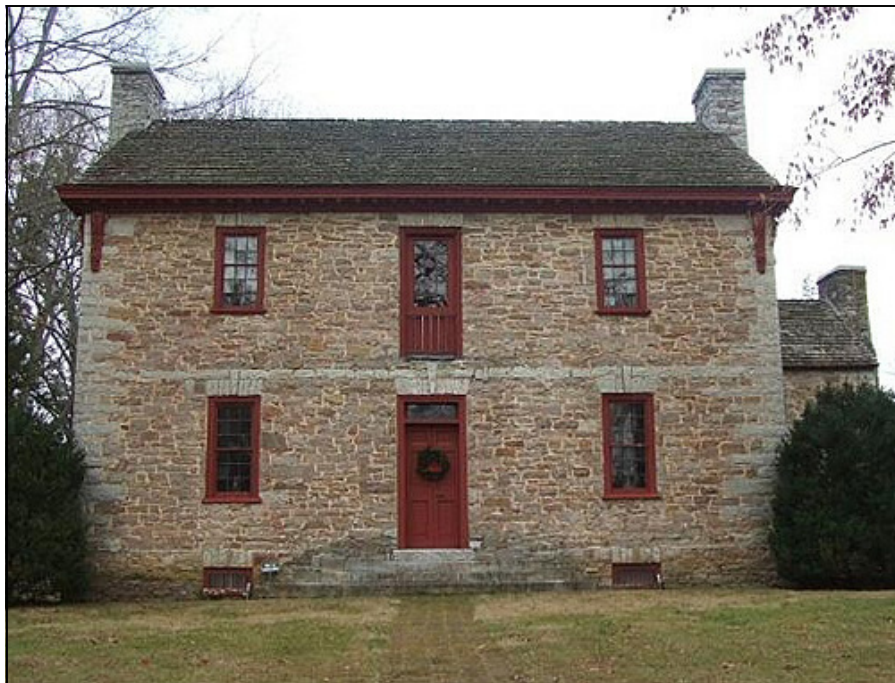
Death has always been a part of life, but the attitudes and customs surrounding it change throughout history. Come and find out about funeral biscuits, wakes, the significance of black fabric and more as we explore Victorian funeral customs through both the Bratton family and their slaves.

Charlotte Folk Society

704.563.7080, <http://www.folksociety.org>

March 11, 2011, **Charlotte Folk Society Gathering Concert & Jams** featuring Jonesalee & Friends performing songs in tribute to "Mother Maybelle" Carter, Great Aunt Stella Center, 926 Elizabeth Ave., 7:30 PM, free; donations appreciated. Refreshments, song circle, slow & fast jams follow concert. Doors open 7 PM. Free parking. 704-563-7080; www.folksociety.org

April 8, 2011, **Charlotte Folk Society Gathering Concert & Jams** featuring "Celtic guitar god" Robin Bullock, Great Aunt Stella Center, 926 Elizabeth Ave., 7:30 PM, free; donations appreciated. Refreshments, song circle, slow & fast jams follow concert. Doors open 7 PM. Free parking.



Ramsey House, Knoxville, Tennessee *(From Remarks from the President, page 2)*



Alexander Chairs - Ramsey House